


When God Seems Silent

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 Audio Transcripts of Sunday Sermons

Smashwords Edition

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When God Seems Silent (6 sermons)

[Follow Jesus \(1 of 6\)](#) How many people can remember the last time Jesus spoke clearly to do something? Here's the real question. Have you done it? When nothing comes, go back to what the last thing Jesus said was. Following Christ introduces you to a whole new set of challenges in your life. Following Christ is a courageous thing to do because you will face things you'd never have had to face. You'll face some opposition, difficulties, challenges, setbacks. You've got more questions than answers, but they're different questions.

[The Princess Syndrome \(2 of 6\)](#) Church isn't perfect, it has many problems, probably so many problems we could spend a day or two just describing them all, but nevertheless His church is His church. It's His bride, it's the one He came for and He will make His church perfect. We can't follow Jesus and not be engaged with His people, and the cause He has in changing a community. Life is not all about you, and the sooner you realise it, the happier you will become.

[Hearing the Voice of God \(3 of 6\)](#) People are the measuring stick of how you're doing with God. It's very easy to be drawn into all range of spiritual experiences and these are wonderful, but if it doesn't convert to being connected to people and working with people and helping people, there is something majorly lacking. If you engage with Jesus, with Him and His work, you will discover the true identity and call of God on your life. If you focus on using God just to get your needs and whatever met, He said you'll end up inward-looking and non productive. You'll actually lose your life. Learn how to hear His voice, and then choose to consistently say yes, and respond by doing something

[Hearing the Voice of God \(4 of 6\)](#) Adam heard God speaking to him when he was in the Garden, even though he'd sinned and walked away from God. People can hear the voice of God. We need to learn what it's like and how to recognise it. Once you become a believer Jesus expects not only would you hear His voice clearly, but you would actually respond and follow Him. So for a believer the number one thing that I would say if you have to learn anything in your life, this is the thing you'd want to learn; how can I build a relationship with Jesus and hear His voice consistently?

[When God Seems Silent \(5 of 6\)](#) Most of us would have had an experience where you really need God to give something to direct you but nothing happened. You sought the Lord, you prayed, read your Bible and nothing seemed to happen. It can be very troubling. You ask God to help you, He doesn't seem to help you; ask God to guide you, He doesn't seem to be guiding you, you don't seem to hear anything and it seems quite disturbing. It seems like at times heaven seems to be silent about the things that are really important.

[Evidence of Your Discipleship \(6 of 6\)](#) By this shall all men know you're My disciples: your love for one another. If you won't let me wash your feet, you won't have a part with Me. I am a foot washer. Those who follow Me are foot washers. Sometimes Jesus doesn't do the foot washing directly, He does it through a member of the body, so we need relationships, connections.

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Follow Jesus (1 of 6)

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Let's open our Bible in Mark 2:14. I want to speak a message called Follow Jesus. It says: He came by and He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax office; and He said to him: Follow Me; so he arose and followed Him. Now as it happened, as He was dining at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and the disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. Notice the word 'follow' again. Then the Scribes and the Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners. They said to the

disciples: how is it He eats and drinks with all of these terrible sinners? Jesus said to them: those who are well, have no need of a physician; but those who are sick. I didn't come to call the righteous, I came to call sinners to repentance.

Let's go back to that first verse again: and Jesus said follow me; and he arose and followed Him. You know Levi was an unusual person. Levi was a tax collector. In those days, Israel lived under Roman oppression, and the Romans transacted with some of the locals to become tax collectors. In other words, they just used them. They used them as a go-between, and they required that they extract taxes. Now you can imagine the attitude there was, to someone who's a tax collector for the hated Romans, and most of them were corrupt people anyway. They put an edge, or a margin, on what they charged for tax; so everyone thinks they're paying too much tax, so they were absolutely scorned, derided and despised. He was a tax collector. He lived in a community where everyone hated him. His only comfort was the money he got, and the wealth he had, from living as a tax collector. But at a personal level, he was without friends; he was without a sense of belonging, or without sense of community. He's one of the most unlikely people in that town that Jesus would call to be His follower, and His disciple.

It's the same today. God chooses the most unlikely people; so the call comes out: follow Me. Here's the interesting thing about this; Jesus said: you didn't choose Me, I chose you. Now there's a lot of things in life you don't choose. You don't choose the city you're born in, you don't choose the nation you're born in, you don't choose your family. There's a lot of things in life you don't choose, and you can't have any say in it, you just have it. There's one thing you also can't choose, and that's the call of God on your life. It's God's decision to call you. Jesus - you didn't choose Him. He chose you. The Bible says: He chose you, before the foundation of the world. Think about this. God chose you. He selected you, chose you for something. The problem is, we don't mind being chosen, we just neglect the next bit. He chose us to do something. He didn't choose you for a ministry. He didn't choose you to be a great leader. He didn't choose you to Pastor

a church. He didn't choose you to have some kind of phenomenal business. He didn't choose you for any of those things; and so often what we think is: because I'm come to Jesus, that now all of my life somehow will go well, and I'll be blessed, and I'll have all these things happening in my life. This is what Jesus called you to do: He called you and me, to Follow Him. Follow Me, follow Me.

I want to highlight for you, five characteristics of people who are following Jesus. I don't care if you call yourself a Christian or not. What counts is, are you following Jesus? People follow many things. I don't know what you're following. You could be here, and we all look when we stood up and worshipped God; but are we following Jesus in our personal life? That's what Jesus called you to do, to follow Him. Think about that. We are called to follow a person.

I looked up in the Bible, how many times the word 'leader' appears. I'm sorry - doesn't appear very often. I looked up in the Bible, how much the words 'follow,' followed,' 'follower' is. It's there everywhere. The world doesn't need a lot more leaders; it needs many people following Jesus. That is the core of it. If you follow Jesus, you'll have an influence, and create ripples; and people will want to follow you, because they see what you have. Why don't you have a think about this: Everyone is following something, everyone. Whether you're aware of it, whether you've made an intentional choice, whether you did or not, you are following something.

One of the things that people follow are celebrities. People love celebrities. Look at Woman's Day, they're full of celebrities; and people are just fascinated with what the celebrities are doing, so they follow celebrities, they follow what they're doing. But you know celebrity is a mask, and it eats away the face. When a person's a celebrity, their personal life is on public display, and the crowd that loves them and follows them can just spit them out the next day. I've worked with many celebrities over in Asia, and I've come to discover that they're like public property; to be used, consumed and discarded when I don't like you anymore. It's a horrendous thing to be a celebrity. Fame exacts a tremendous personal price, and what I can see for most celebrities, there's very little in their life worth following. And yet they influence people, they give their opinions, they're promoted as having values, and we see them on the television, all that kind of thing. There's no value in this. Jesus called us not to follow the celebrities of the world, but to follow Him.

Here's the second thing people follow. People follow fashion. You notice that people follow fashion? They want to know what the latest thing is; and it's very hard to resist the latest thing. That's why we live in a consumer society. There's a pressure to follow: everyone else has it, I need to have it. I've got to have it! I noticed this week, they had a great release came out on television, and guess what it is? It is the iPad Mini - you just HAVE to have it! No, I don't have to have it; and so there they hold it up, and it's this latest thing, you just NEED to have. Everyone's going to buy one of these - you'll need one of these too. You'll be second-class if you don't have one of them. It'll make you happy if you have one - until the year after when they produce another model. See, this is what happens. The Bible says: the fashion of this world passes away. In other words,

what people think is great today, is gone tomorrow; something else is in its place. So when the Bible talks about the fashion in this world, it's talking about its values, what it believes in, what is hot, what is great to go.

I can remember about three to four years ago, it was really hot to buy up property; and then suddenly it's a disaster. That's the fashion of the world. I remember reading a little while ago: oh, there's an oil crisis, the world's running out of oil, and blah blah blah blah. I just read yesterday and they tell me how they've found these new methods of extracting oil, and now America will now increase its oil production, and become almost not dependent at all on any global oil from other countries. Hello! What's going on here? I read in the paper, they say: oh, we'll worry about global warming. The world is warming up and whatever; but I can remember in the '70s, they were worried about the next Ice Age. [Laughter] Someone can't be right with all of this. It's called the 'fashion of the world', and it influences you; and you begin to live, and you begin to set your whole course of your life around it, begin to start to shape our values and what we think. It affects the way we educate our children, raise our children, the fashion of this world. But Jesus said: follow Me. Don't follow the world, follow Me, follow Me, follow Me. Be distinctive - follow Me. Follow Me. That's His command, to follow Him.

Here's another area that people follow. People follow the crowd, especially if you're a teenager. I've been following you on Twitter. Really? Following me on Twitter? Actually I don't even use the thing, but however, people follow all kinds of people on Twitter; and so there they are. So we say who are you following? Well I'm Twittering so-and-so, following all of their Tweets. Wherever they go they say mindless things, like I met with so-and-so for lunch, and you're following all of that. Why are you following them like that? Where does all that go, that mindless Tweeting, where people just blurb out what's on their mind? They all hang out there, had lunch with so-and-so today. Oh really, oh - and Facebook's the other one. We're getting to that one! [Laughter] Facebook. My goodness me - and so social media now, you've got this whole thing of people are following what so-and so - they can't do a day without getting on the Facebook, and finding out what's going on. Oh, they're doing that, I need to do that - without being aware of it, and I'm not speaking against them - these things are wonderful ways that we can connect and communicate, and it's a great influence, but who are you following? Are you following Facebook? Are you following Twitter? What are you following? Who are you following? What is setting the course for your life?

Jesus said: follow Me, I'll Tweet you every day! [Laughter] How about that? [Applause] You want to see heaven's Facebook? There it is there, the Bible. Get into it every day, and look up and see: oh, that's happening, oh, that's happening. If you love this, as much as you love getting on Facebook, you might find you follow Jesus, instead of someone else. Come on, think about this. Who are we following? Then the other thing is, the popularity circus in the Christian world; another celebrity circus. Should we go there? Well I can remember when I was told: you need to go to this leadership conference, this is one of the foremost Christian leaders. You need to go and hear what he has to say, and we went and heard what he had to say, and I came away with the

conclusion in the middle of it: that man is manifesting, and needs help. [Laughter] Am I the only one who can see this?

Then a little while later, I was following the Christian news, and I found that someone who is a prominent leader, that's influenced thousands of churches all over the world stood up and - very courageously stood up by the way. I admire and honour his courage - and said: we got it all wrong, when we said: copy the corporate structure of the world. I first of all, had to just honour him, that he had the courage to say he got it wrong; and my thinking is: what about the thousands of churches that are all going down that route, and had been led astray by following something else other than Jesus? Come on, this has ruined churches. It's totally ruined, and changed, the nature of the western church, following those models. God's trying to bring the church back to its family origin, its supernatural origin, and to get back to following Jesus. That's what the Bible tells us to do: follow Jesus. Jesus said: come follow Me; and you know when you follow other things, you end up usually following demonic spirits. The Bible says: this whole world operates under the influence of the demonic realm; in Ephesians 2. Some people are following their offences - so you hurt me. Hello! Who's leading you now? Is Jesus leading you? If Jesus was leading you, He'd take you that way, to forgive them and bless them and connect with them. No, no, no, no, you're following your offences, and you're following your bondages, and following your addictions. Actually you're being carried around, and pushed around, by demonic spirits.

I go to many places, they don't even talk about it. I went to one church, a big church, a very famous church, and they said: we didn't realise that deliverance was part of the great commission. Who are you following? Who are you following? You got a book, you got the Holy Ghost, you got men of faith, that you can model your life on? We're not called to follow them. We're called to follow Jesus. We're called to follow Jesus. It's following people that'll get you into trouble. We do need to follow Jesus, and Jesus ministers to us through people. In fact actually, following Jesus requires we connect with people. However, we shall right at the beginning, at the core of our being: I'm following the Lord. You know, I've found in the course of my life, that lots of people had a plan for my life. My family had a plan, but it wasn't God's plan. Joy's family had a plan, and they told me it over and over, and that wasn't God's plan either. The plan God had was quite unique, and I couldn't find it until I followed Jesus. Until I made a decision to put my life in His hands, I was in a mess; and if I'd stayed listening to what everyone else said, I would never have been here. Constantly, at key points in my life, I've had to make decisions, follow Jesus. That's all I'm called to do in my life. I am not, by identity, a Pastor. I function as a Pastor, but I am a follower of Jesus. That's who I am. I'm a son of the living God; so it doesn't matter where I am, or what I do, the identity never changes. It's still: am I following Jesus? That's who I want to be, all my life, a follower of Him; who loved me, and gave Himself for me, following Jesus.

So let's have a look at what following Jesus might mean. You could always ask yourself right now: I wonder who I'm following? Who's the voice in my life? Here's the thing about voices in your life - have a look at what fruit they have. Don't just look at their giftings. I have seen over the years, many gifted people and talented people, and they shine very

smart; but you look behind them, and oh my goodness! Have they got a good marriage? No. Have they got a good family? No. Have they got savings? No. Have they got a good track record at work? No. What? Why am I listening to that person? Well they look good, and they're saying smooth things. You've got to look for fruit - and follow Jesus.

Okay, let's have a look at it, what following Jesus might look like. Okay, first thing is, it's good to tell you what it doesn't mean - now you're going to love this bit. It does NOT mean that you have all the answers! In fact, you've got more questions than answers. How many know that? Got lots of questions, wish God would tell you the answer? You have lots of questions. You have more questions than you had before you started, but they're different questions, you know? The question I used to have was: who can I go out and have a drink with? Now I don't have that question anymore - you have different kinds of questions when you're following the Lord. The second thing is, it doesn't mean is suddenly all together - I just come to Jesus, now my life is all right. Actually your life isn't all together. You discover as the light comes into just how broken and messy you are, and I remember crying for the first two years, and many times since then; as I've become aware, with every fresh touch of Jesus, what's in my life that needs to change. It doesn't mean you've got your life together, so don't think you've got to have your life together in a church. Stop trying to impress people. Follow Jesus. He just takes you like you are.

He said to the tax collector, He said: that guy there, follow Me. Everyone said: why is Jesus mixing with these wrong kinds of people? That's what religion does, it's got you all boxed u., you're never good enough, you're the wrong kind of person; but Jesus said: don't listen to them. Follow Me. I'll accept you, love you. I've called you. Your part is the following, be available to follow. So it doesn't mean that you've got your act together, doesn't mean that you're even too smart, see? It doesn't mean that your life will go smoothly. How many thought your life would go smoothly after you become a Christian? It did for five minutes, then after that lots of things happened. No, it doesn't mean your life will go smoothly, without challenges, setbacks or difficulties. In fact, my experience has been quite the opposite. I found there are challenges that come I would never have had without following Christ.

Following Christ introduces you to a whole new set of challenges in your life. Following Christ is a courageous thing to do, because you will face things you'd never have had to face. You'll face some opposition, difficulties, challenges, setbacks. You'll face things, and you'll think: God should have done that; and He doesn't do it. You face griefs and difficulties, and you think: whoa! But you know God is creating an authentic representation of Christ, and people are watching how you respond; and they're asking: do we see Jesus in this person, as they go through that? Do people see Jesus, reincarnated in you, living through you, as you face those challenges of life? That's what people are looking for. They're not looking for a perfect Christian. They love to say: oh well you're a Christian, you shouldn't be doing that. I say: I'm a Christian, I love Jesus, I do all kinds of things that aren't right, but God's helping me to grow in those areas. You understand that? You're walking with God. It's a journey. That's what following Jesus is,

it's a journey; by nature, it's a journey; and so it doesn't mean you'll see clearly everything God's doing.

I would like to have a plan. I'd like God to have just laid out for me a plan, step by step, of how it would all work out. I didn't get anything, except the next step; and you know what? I've never had much more than the next step. People say: why don't you have this big thing with this? I said: well I don't know, all I know is I know what to do next. I know I know what to do next; and I can see ahead some of the way, and I'll walk as far as I can see, but I don't have it all together. And it's nice to set out plans, but you've got to have them flexible, because God can just interrupt them like that. Do have a plan, but make it a flexible plan. Put it in pencil, not in ink aye? [Laughter] Allow God to interrupt your life, because you'll find if you're walking with Jesus, and following Jesus, He interrupts your schedule something terribly! It's part of what He's like, and so then it becomes an issue of: who's in charge of my schedule? Am I following Jesus; or following my schedule? A lot of people are following their schedule. Some are following their finance, which is not much going anywhere. We should be following Jesus, need to be letting Jesus direct how our life goes. So it doesn't mean you won't have any of those problems. In fact you'll have all sorts of things like that. It's a journey, so following Jesus is actually a journey of faith. It's a journey; I'll put it in a different language. It's a journey of connection to a person, and trusting Him; and that's what you're called to do: follow Jesus. We could just simplify the whole Christian walk, it's just this: following Jesus. That means, that you're on a journey of life with Him.

So what does it mean to follow Jesus? Have a look in Matthew, Chapter 4. You'll see it in there. I think the church has got to return to the simplicity again, of just following Jesus; and it takes away all the complications, of all sorts of things, when actually your life is just centred: today as I rise, I celebrate, worship and follow Jesus. I let Him help me with my day. Yes, I've got my plans, and I put my plans in His hands, and I choose to follow Him. Jesus said, in Matthew 4, Verses 19 and 20; and He said to them: follow Me. I will make you become fishers of men; and immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Now that word 'followed,' when we think follow, we kind of think there's someone over here out in the front, and I'm behind, and they're telling me where to go. How many think that's what it means? See, we would normally think that's what it means. I used to think - until today I thought that's what it meant. I thought: well Jesus, there you are, you're going ahead, you follow Me; so all I've got to do is listen, and be told what to do. Actually that's not what it means; and that will release you immensely, when you realise, He isn't going to tell you everything to do.

If Jesus has to tell you everything to do, then you're not taking responsibility for ownership of your life, and bringing your contribution of creativity into it. You're not owning your dreams in your heart, you're not owning the things that God put in your life. You're waiting to be told what to do like a slave; and we have to learn obedience. We'll come to that in a moment - but you see the word means: to go on a journey together with someone. So when the Bible says: follow Me; Jesus is saying something simply like this. He said: I'm inviting you, to walk with Me, through your life's journey. In other words, I want to come into your journey, and I want to walk with you, alongside you. See

the thing about walking alongside is, that we're partners and sharers of life; so He's not waiting for you every day just to have some little prayer time, and ask Him what to do, and wait and hope you'll hear something. He's asking you to invite Him each day into the sphere of your life, and begin to walk with Him, and have Him part of what you do through the day. It's a journey of life, therefore it comes as every aspect of our life.

So the word 'to follow' means: to be on the same road as a companion. Or it means like this, it means: to enter another person's world, and journey with them. So getting it like this, Jesus is saying: I want you to enter My world, My perspective, and journey your life with Me; and that'll result in a whole number of things. I'll explain some of those things. There's probably more, but I'll give you some that are very clear to me. So it's not the goal: that I'll be this, or I'll be that, or whatever; I'll have this or that. It's not the goal that I'll get to heaven. The journey itself is the goal. Now of course there's rewards in heaven, of course there's things we look forward to, and there's things we press through. But God wants you to understand: enjoy the journey, focus on the journey. He said: follow Me. That means, walk on a journey of life with Me, bring Me into every aspect of your life, bring Me into your life. He didn't just say: read your Bible, or pray. Those are great things, but Jesus said: you can read the scriptures, but these speak of Me, and you won't come to Me that you have life. So what He's wanting to do is, to come into every sphere of our life.

We tend to compartmentalise our lives, so here we are, we're at church. We're at church, doing Jesus' thing; then I'm out doing something else. That's not how it is. He said: I want to be part with you, in a journey through your life, that's every part of your life, every aspect of it, see? So it means to be caught up with what God is doing. So here's a core question. On any time, any day, when you face any situation, what is God doing? What is Jesus doing? What do I see? You know what Jesus said? He said: I do what I see the Father doing. Now sometimes He was really purposeful, He was on a mission, away He'd go. Sometimes He carried on like there was no panic at all. You know they'd say: oh, a girl's dying, she's dying, you've got to hurry, got to hurry, got to hurry! And He just moseys along, and stops to talk to a lady. Why? Because He saw what the Father was doing, and so He lived His life this way. Was He busy? Yes, sometimes so busy, He couldn't even eat. However, He had one driving thing: just listen to what the spirit of God is speaking to Me, and do that. See what the spirit of God is on, see what Father is showing Me what to do. That could be in relationships, in terms of ministry focus. He'll get up one day, have a time of prayer, they said: we're having a revival, stick around and preach; but He would say: no, I've got to move somewhere else. He was internally led by the spirit of God, He Himself was a disciple of the Father. He was a disciple. Notice this - He said: I say what I hear the Father saying, I do what I see the Father doing. In other words, what He's saying is: I've learned to yield to the spirit of God, and be happy with this life, full of the joy of the spirit, flowing with what My Father is doing.

When the parents said: where were You? We sought You; and they were angry, and they were scolding Him for staying, He said: don't you understand, I had to be about My Father's business? Even at the age of 12, He was aware of the presence of the Holy

Spirit around His life, guiding Him what to do. So that starts to get you really thinking how you do life, because a lot of people are living in the house of God like a slave, waiting for God to tell them. He doesn't tell them, they don't know what to do, so they just carry on, and then kind of disconnect from God - except for Sundays. So what does it mean then, to follow Jesus? Let me give you five marks of following Jesus.

Number one, which we've already referred to is, following Jesus means walking your journey, it means sharing life with Him, just share your life with Him. Share your life. Talk about your family, talk about your marriage, talk about the issues. In other words, there's no issue of your life, that He's not interested in coming and helping. He's interested in the pains, the struggles, the fears. He knows them better than you do. He's asking that you would invite Him into that part of your life; so when you begin to share the aspects - Lord, today... - and it's not just an hour's prayer at the beginning of the day. It's just on the way through the day - Lord, I don't know what to do about that, that really got me by surprise. Just talk with Him, and it's so simple, to just engage Him like that; to talk with the Lord, and listen, and slow down and listen to your heart.

In Mark 3:14 it says: He chose them to be with Him. So number one, to be following Jesus, is to be with Him. Now to be with Him doesn't mean I've got to have an hour of prayer every day. That'd be a great help for you. Being with Jesus means: I consciously and intentionally allow Him to come in and around whatever I'm doing through the day. In other words, I just turn my mind to Him, and say: Lord, what do you think about that; or Lord, what about this? How do I handle that Lord? It's like praying continually. It's just being in a flow, where actually whatever I'm doing, Jesus is with me. Otherwise you've got this thing: when I'm in church and ministry, Jesus is with me; but when I'm in my workplace, Jesus is not with me. This is not true; and that kind of thinking has created this - it's a Greek thinking of: this is spiritual; and that's secular. In God's eyes there's no division. If you're at home, and you're a mother and a wife, and you're fully involved there, bring Jesus into your life, and into your home, and you're following Jesus. But I'm not out preaching. No, no, you don't need to - or I'm not out doing this, I'm not out doing that. No, you don't need to. Do what you're doing now, being a great wife, a great mother, and do it with great joy, and bring Jesus into it, and you'll be following Jesus, so that means talking with Him. It means commune with Him, talking with Him about life. Sometimes we think we've got to run everything ourselves, and we get stressed out unnecessarily. One of the signs you brought Jesus into it is: in His presence, there is joy. Ha ha! You lose your joy, lose your peace? Jesus isn't there anymore. You've shifted. Start to open up again.

The second thing is, we need to develop a relationship with Him. That means: listening to His voice; and responding. In John 15:27 He says: My sheep hear My voice, I know them and they follow Me. So get this, so the biggest skill you can learn, if you're going to learn any skill, is this one skill: how to hear what God is saying. If there's one thing every believer must learn, it's how to hear the voice of God, recognise it, and then trust Him that this is the best way for my life. It's about knowing He loves me; and trusting Him, by listening to what He says, and doing it. There's no following Jesus, without doing what He says to do. How can there be? How can there be?

John 14:21, He who has My commandments, and does them, is the one who loves Me. Now let me ask you this. Don't put your hand up, because this is not to embarrass you. How many people can remember the last time that Jesus spoke clearly to do something? Don't put your hand up. Here's the question, that's the starter question, here's the real question. Have you done it? Have you done it? You're in a meeting, and you felt God speak to you about something. Did you write it down, and go do it, or did you say: man that's great, God spoke to me; but didn't do it? So responding to the Holy Spirit in obedience is a crucial part of being a follower of Jesus. There's no other way. So this is the interesting thing; God puts His spirit in us, so you'll always have Jesus with you, have the spirit of God with you. You've just got to decide whether you become conscious of His spirit within, and attuned to listen to the flow of spontaneity. As soon as you lose your peace, stop. You're disconnecting from following Jesus. You're going your own way, and you'll be stressed out. Why so many people are stressed out is, they've got burdens on them, that God never intended them to have, because they're no longer following Jesus. They've actually gone their own way, thinking: I have to work it all out myself. It's learning how to bring these things to the Lord, and listen to Him, and respond to what He has to say.

It's all so complicated isn't it? So that's a very decisive question: what was the last thing Jesus said to you? Are you doing it? You know, one of the things God spoke to me of a little while ago, and it really saved me huge grief, He spoke at a personal level: get rid of your mortgage. Get rid of debt, so we started to work hard on getting rid of our mortgage. Now that was just before the building boom, and then the building boom came. Everyone's saying: you need to do this; in fact many were saying: you need to mortgage the church, and expand, and all this kind of thing; and I listened to it all. In the end I thought: what was the last thing Jesus said to me? I prayed, and asked Him: speak to me, tell me something, what do I do? I'm a leader, tell me? - and nothing. So when nothing comes, go back to what the last thing Jesus said was. I went back to the last thing, and I said: you know something? The last thing Jesus said was: get rid of my debt. If He said it personally, then there's no difference between personal and corporate, we keep it the same way corporate. Then of course, within about two years, that whole building thing went, prices of everything dropped; we'd have been carrying a mortgage up to our eyeballs, and no way of servicing it. So sometimes you just don't get a fresh direction. You've got to follow the old one, until you get a new one. That's not sort of rocket science, all this stuff is it? Following Jesus. [Laughs]

I'll give you the last three quickly. The next one is: if you're going to follow Jesus, we must commit to personal change. We must commit to personal change. Let me tell you this: there is no following Jesus, without commitment to change. How can there be? If you're following Him, He wants you to change. Here's the plan of God, Romans 8. God's design is that we be conformed, become more like Christ. That means, I've got to change; because I'm not very like Christ, in a lot of areas in my life. How many find sometimes you're not very forgiving? How many find sometimes you get quite angry? How many know sometimes we've got all kinds of things that we don't like in there? God wants us to change! So what amazes me - I'll just put it straight out here - as a Pastor, we know of so many marriages which are struggling, have got major issues in them.

When we do a marriage seminar, people don't come, and actually commit to change. That's foolish.

We have wonderful people here who teach on training children; and I've seen some, and they've got their kids out of control, things are not going well. Hello! Are you blind or something? Invest. Get some training, learn what to do. Church is to be an equipping centre, not a nursery, not a hospital. It has those aspects to it, but it's one thing to have like a little room, where you carry your patients, and you help them for a little, while they recover. It's another thing for the whole thing to be full of patients, and nurses running around giving IV feeds every day, trying to look after - this is not the church. Jesus says, those who follow Me, they're called to be warriors, and to be great soldiers for Him. So some people have got issues with finance, and so we get involved with counselling with them, and we find they have these massive issues of finance. The whole financial world is a total mess, they're not following Jesus; they're following the chaos of advertising in the world, and irresponsibility; yet when something's put on, they don't commit to come. What stupidity is that? We have to be committed to invest in ourselves. It's not the Pastor's job, or the leader's job, to make your life go right. You've got to own this yourself.

If you need help, you put up your hand, and find it, from wherever you can get it. If you've got brokenness in your soul, everyone has a bit of it. Get along to a course. If it doesn't do it all, go back and do it again, don't worry about it. Just own change, own this business of growing. It's your life. Don't stay a baby all your life. Make a decision to invest. Next year, as we begin to share what we'll do next year, you make the decision: what do I need to grow in? In fact, before you even get there: what do I need to grow in? Where do I need to grow personally? Where do I need to change? What things do I need to learn, to become a better follower of Jesus? Next year, when there's opportunities up, you put your hand up, and turn up, and get to change. That's how life works. Get in a group - so commit to change. Ha ha! You've gone all quiet on that one. Tell someone next to you: he was talking about you, you know; it wasn't me, I've changed enough. I don't need to change - I've arrived. [Laughs] How many know someone that's already arrived? There we are, don't need to change.

Matthew 16, Jesus said this. He said: if any man really purposes in their heart, that they will come after Me, and walk the journey with Me; this is what He said, oh, you're going to love this! He said: you'll have to deal with selfishness, and there'll be a cross, there'll be a part of your life that I can't carry for you. There'll be some stuff you won't like, where you'll have to actually surrender and yield. He said: you can't follow Me, unless you're doing that route. Now this is what we want: we want a path of following Jesus, that bypasses Gethsemane, Calvary; just take me straight to the resurrection! [Laughter] Glory! I want glory! I want buzzes, and things happening! But no, it's not going to be like that. Before every resurrection, there's a death; and I have journeyed with God long enough to know, that it goes in ebbs of flows of life and death, that life comes when something dies.

So sometimes the thing that needs to die, is your dependency on yourself, the bondage you've got in your heart; there's an area you have to bring to the cross, issues in our life. Jesus said: if you want to follow Me, you're going to have to deal with self-centredness, the self-protective life, the self-governing life; and take up your cross. That means specifically, you will face some challenges in your life, that no one else will face; and if you will face them, and walk with Jesus in them, you'll come out with a resurrection life out the other side. No one can carry your cross. We can help make one for you. [Laughter] Wouldn't that be right? We could make crosses for everyone, it'd be great; but you're the only one who can carry your cross. [Laughs]

Okay, here's the last two then. Learn how to be great at serving, to serve generously. I don't know anyone following Jesus, who isn't a generous server, giving of yourself. Jesus said: in the world, everyone wants to be great, and be a kingpin, and have privilege, and have this and have that; but it shall not be so in My kingdom. He said: if you want to be great in My kingdom - Matthew 20:28 - then learn to be a servant. You want to be the top dog? Who wants to be the top dog? The most important and famous in the kingdom? Awesome! Just serve everyone, and there you are, you've arrived! Now that just gets over you, because you see people want title, they wanted this, they wanted that, but actually it's just in the serving of people you grow as a follower of Jesus. Here's the thing. In church, so many people want a position. Why would you want a position? Ridiculous. It's just a job to do. Anyone desires the office of an elder, do work, so work, you've got to work, something to do, so all positions are just titles.

See, what really counts, is serving. So if you've got the kingdom heart, you're a follower of Jesus, you can take on a role, and then you can let go of the role. You can pick up this role, and then let go of that role, that's not a problem. Why? Because your life isn't in the role. Your life is in following Jesus. Your life is in serving; and if you're a server of Jesus, it doesn't matter whether anyone here notices you at all. What really counts, is the audience of one. Well I'll tell you something, if you're following Jesus, and you're serving well, everyone's going to notice you, because you'll stand out by being so different. I know it's sort of basic, it's not rocket science - tell someone: this is simple, you knew that didn't you? I knew you knew that.

Here's the last one then. I'm not even going to go into this one too far, but let me just tell you, here's the last one. If we're going to follow Jesus - I'll put it to you really straight on this one - it does mean: we share His mission. Now let me ask you this: how is it possible to follow Jesus, and not share His mission in the world? Jesus is constantly engaging with lost people. He came to save the world, not just a few people at church. Think about it - and His mandate is to go, and engage with other people, and make them disciples; not just get a decision for Jesus. One of the greatest deceptions of all - I don't even know how many people, when they say a little prayer, really get saved. I know that's not what Jesus said, you can't see it anywhere in the Bible. He said: I want you to be people who follow Me; and following Me, means learning to listen to Me, and do the things that I say. That's what we're called to make; so you can't look around a church, and say whether it's any good or not. You can see certain factors of it, but one

thing you've really got to look for, is how many people are pursuing passionately, they're followers of Jesus; and those signs, those five signs will be there.

Now what does it mean then, to engage in mission? It means: just as Jesus entered your world through someone; you consciously make a decision, you'll intentionally enter the world of other people, who don't know Jesus; and find their story, find their journey, and help them discover the One, and hear His call on their life for the first time, and then encourage them to follow Him. We should not think that it's okay just to pray a sinner's prayer, and that's that. That's not what Jesus came to do. That's only one part. It's like getting your foot out of the womb, but the rest doesn't come out. You know there is a lot more to go. We're called actually, to build people, who love Jesus, and follow Him.

So here's some simple things then, you could look and ask yourself these questions: am I bringing Jesus into most parts of my life, some parts of my life, no parts of my life? Have I reserved Jesus for Sundays? What room do I make for Jesus? Do I talk with Him, engage Him in His word, in prayer? Do I bring Him intentionally into the issues in my life? Number one, that's very, very important - do I bring Him.

The second thing is, am I listening to Him? What did He last say to me; and am I doing it? Am I listening and building a trusting relationship, where I can trust Him with my finances, trust Him with my marriage, trust Him with my pains and sorrows? Have I made a decision, am I serving? Am I committed to change? What did I last change in? Where was there an issue that I last stood up, and actually embraced change? How engaged am I in reaching people? This coming year's going to be a great year. We're going to push forward in this whole theme of becoming a follower of Jesus, becoming a follower of the One who loved us. Amen?

Why don't we close our eyes right now. Father in heaven, I just thank You that You love us, that You are with us; and I thank You that each person here has heard the call of God. Lord, I pray for grace to follow you.

Just while our eyes are closed and heads are bowed, is there any person here has not yet actually responded personally to Jesus Christ? God sent His Son in the world, to die on the cross for your sins. If you're here, and haven't made a personal response to Christ; to receive Him into your life, to commit your life into His hands, to journey through your life with Him. God calls you to follow His Son, Jesus Christ. In Him is life. Whoever follows Him, will have the light of life. They won't walk in darkness. If you've never made that decision to follow Jesus Christ, I'd love you just to raise your hand today, and say: today's my day, I want to make that decision, become a follower of Jesus.

I wonder just while we've been listening, and just enjoying the meeting today, in the midst of it, if you felt God speak to you about some aspect of following Jesus. It could be just beginning to share your life with Him at a greater level, it could be the issue then of listening to Him and reading His word, listening to His voice, responding to Him; obeying something He's already told you to do. It could be an issue of an area of

change in your life, your marriage, your family, your finances; whatever it is, you just need to make a decision, you're going to start to move there. Maybe it's the area of just engagement in mission, or engagement in serving in some kind of way. What is your serving like? Do people find you as a generous server, or do they find you as someone who's always withdrawn, and holding back waiting for someone to serve them? Are you engaging intensely in anyone's life, reaching out to people to enter their world, find out where they are, and let them see: you don't have all the answers, but there is a God who loves them, that could help them; and point them to Him.

When we follow a Pastor or leader, we point people to them, and their preaching, or their ministry or whatever. When we follow a church, we point to the church, this is the area where you get your help. When we follow Jesus we point people to Him. How many are feeling God's spirit speaking to you, and challenging you today, about following Jesus? I'd like you just to raise your hand, if there's some area that God spoke to you, just raise your hand. God bless, God bless, God bless, many hands, many hands.

Father, we just thank You today, that Your hand is on our life to change us. I pray that change will become practical, tangible, and real; as we exit this year, and even into next year, Lord there'll be an arising of people to follow You, in a whole new dimension. Lord, we give you all the honour, because You model for us, what it means. You came from heaven, You came into this earth, You love people, You walk with people, You engage with people, You serve people. You've brought a revelation of the kingdom of heaven. Now Lord, we commit our lives to do the same, in Jesus' Mighty name.

Summary Notes

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1. Introduction

- Mk.2:14 “And as He passed by He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom and said to him :”Follow Me” ... and he arose and followed him”
- Levi was a tax collector employed and used by the Roman oppressors.
- Tax collectors were despised, scorned and hated by Jews, considered traitors.
- Jesus chose Levi : summoned him to follow Him.
- John 15:16 “You did not choose me, I chose you” – He invited himself into our life
- Each of us is chosen by God – His call is to “Follow Jesus”.
- Our call is to attach to a person Jesus and to “Follow Him!” – a personal call.

2. Everyone is following something!

- Everyone follows someone or something – only question is who/what will we follow?

e.g.

- (1) Celebrities – pop, movie, business – Fame is a mask that eats away face
- (2) Fashion/values of the world (1 Cor. 7:3 fashion of this world)
- (3) Popular leaders in the Christian World (1 Cor.3:3-5 Paul? Apollos?)
- (4) Demonic Spirits (Eph.2:1-2)

(5) The Crowd (friends, face-book, social media, web, twitter) (Acts 28:4-6 ... they changed their minds)

· Jesus is the true leader – will you follow him?

3. What does it Mean to Follow Jesus?

(a) What it does Not Mean?

Following Jesus does not mean that:

- i) You have all the answers
- ii) Your life is suddenly all together
- iii) Your life will go smoothly without challenges, setbacks, difficulties
- iv) You will always see clearly what God is doing
- v) You will always have money

It is a journey – constantly moving after the one you said Yes to!

It is not the goal, the reward, the destination – it is the journey itself being with Jesus

(b) What it Means to “Follow”

· Mt 4:19-20 “He said to them Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men, and they straight away left their nets and followed him”.

· “Followed” = NT190 = Akoloutheo : ‘az’ union; “Kelenthos” = road

= to be on the same road as a companion

= to enter another person’s world and join them on their journey

= to be caught up with what God is doing and participate

(c) How We Follow Jesus

(i) Share Your Life with Jesus

- Mk.3:14 “He appointed twelve that they might be “with Him”
- “Be With” = intentional sharing of our life allowing the Holy Spirit into every area.
- Not just “me and Jesus” but also connection to His Body the Church.
- Acts 9:4 We cannot separate Jesus from His people, His church.

(ii) Develop Relationship with Jesus

- Jn.15:27 “My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me”
- Following Jesus is closely connected to serving Him and serving people.
- Following means trusting and obeying His words – doing what He says.
- Jn. 14:2 “He who has my commands and keeps them, it is he who loves me”

(iii) Commit to Personal Change/Spiritual Growth

- God desires each of us to become like Christ – to represent him Rom.8:29.
- Spiritual Growth is not accidental it is a journey of intentional change.
- Mt.16:24-27 “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me”

Literally: “If any person resolves or determines in his heart to journey with me he must

contradict his selfish nature and surrender to my leadership”.

- Jesus accomplished at the Cross all that is needed to save us. Our response is to apply it to our lives.

(iv) Learn how to Serve

- Jn.12:26 “If any man serves me let him follow me”

- Following Jesus is closely connected to serving Him and serving people.

- Mt.20:25-28 “Whoever desires to become great among you let him be your servant”

- Jesus rejected the leadership model of the world – position and privilege.

- Jesus modelled and taught serving : great followers are great servers.

- Kingdom Leadership = serving people and meeting needs.

(v) Share His Mission

- Mt.28:18-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you”

- This is an intentional effort to enter the lives of other people and journey with them to become followers of Christ.

- John 21:20 – Follow Me!

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